

## The PRIDE Hangar



The PRIDE Hangar as 44 SMW HQ

Construction on the PRIDE hangar began on 6 July 1947 to prepare for the enormous B-36 *Peacemaker* bombers about to arrive at Rapid City Air Force Base. It reached completion on 24 October 1949, and reputedly stood as the world's largest monolithic (having no visible internal supports) structure. The first hangar constructed away from the base's original North-South operational apron, a new operational apron and flight line developed around the hangar paralleling the newer Northwest-Southeast runway.

The concrete framework poured over the skeletal metal structure is 7 inches thick at the base and 5 inches at the center. The hangar has 13 ribs, each 5 feet high and spaced approximately 20 feet apart. The ribs—supporting the roof—have pedestal supports buried about two feet underground. The building has approximately 125,649 square feet of floor space, large enough for two (although designed for three) B-36s or six B-29 *Superfortresses*.

The PRIDE hangar became the home of the 44th Strategic Missile Wing when they activated at Ellsworth AFB on 1 January 1962. The interior resembled a mini-mall; with offices, missile repair area, snack bar, and more. It served as the hub of Ellsworth missile activity until the missile wing inactivated in 1994.

After the 44 SMW's inactivation, the 77th Bomb Squadron operated from the hangar. The 77 BS eventually got its own home, and the PRIDE Hangar retired, currently housing a running track and a partial hardwood floor with basketball hoops. Occasionally, the wing uses the massive interior space as a staging and processing area for mobility exercises. Although its function has changed over the years, this historic structure stands as a constant reminder of Ellsworth's rich Cold War history.

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